

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday per Annum - B  
Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15;  
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24;  
John 6:24-35  
Little Flower - 8/5/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

After the multiplication of the loaves and fish, the sixth chapter of John's Gospel transitions to Jesus' teaching about the bread of life that will culminate in his teaching about the Eucharist

Today's reading from the Book of Exodus prefigures Jesus' teaching in the Gospel. In the Gospel, the Jews reminded Jesus that their ancestors ate manna in the desert. Jesus responds that it was not Moses who gave them bread from heaven but his Father. Today's reading from Exodus tells the story of God feeding the Israelites in the desert.

The reading from Exodus contains an important lesson about faith. The Israelites had a very short memory. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron when they were hungry in the desert because they had "forgotten" all that God had done for them to liberate them from slavery in Egypt. Instead of thanking God for the gift of their freedom, they blamed Moses and Aaron for leading them into the desert to die of famine.

Today many people seem to no longer believe in God. I am not sure how true that is. Obviously some people are non-believers. However, I would argue that most people who seem to no longer believe in God suffer from the forgetfulness of God. In fact, I believe that all of us at times forget about God.

One reason we often suffer from forgetfulness of God is because we live such hyperactive, distracted lives. Also, some people forget about God when everything is going well in their lives. At those times they live as though they believe that they are self-made men or women. On the other hand, some people forget about God when everything is going poorly in their lives. In those times, they live as though they believe that God has abandoned them.

We all need to become more intentional about God. To do that, we have to see with eyes of faith. We have to look at ourselves, others, and our world with a sense of wonder and awe. We will never forget God if we live lives of gratitude. Interestingly little children see with eyes of faith.

In today's Gospel, after the Jews find Jesus, he challenges them by telling them that they were not looking for him because they saw signs, i.e., signs of God's presence, power, and activity, but because they had eaten a good dinner. In other words, they were not looking at the multiplication of the loaves and fish with eyes of faith. Paradoxically, when Jesus tells them that the first work God wants them to do is to believe in him, they ask for a sign of power.

Jesus concludes this part of his discourse telling them, "*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.*" In this part of John 6, Jesus is not talking about the Eucharist. He is talking about himself as food and drink. In other words, he is calling the people to believe in him and in his word, i.e, to entrust their lives and futures to him. In John's Gospel Jesus Himself is the Word. He, in his person and in his word, feeds our faith, therefore, feeds our spirit.

My brothers and sisters, more than once in today's Gospel, Jesus reminds the people that he and his word are life giving. Therefore, if we want to be fully alive, we will only be fully alive if we have faith in him. We live in four sets of relationships—our relationships with others, our relationship with ourselves, our relationship with our world, and our relationship with God. If we neglect any of the four, if we do not feed all four, we are not fully alive as persons. As Christians, we believe that we can only be fully alive in Christ.